

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 2, Hosea 2-3

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Well, it's great to see each of you here. I was a little concerned. I thought maybe I should have promised to come in a tank top and shorts.

Maybe that would have gotten a bigger crowd. On the other hand, it might have been a smaller crowd, too. Hosea, God's unchanging love.

And there's a sense in which we immediately dive into that at the end of chapter one and the beginning of chapter two. I've got an NIV here, and it has a heading between chapter two, verse one, and verse two, as though verse one should go with the previous two verses of chapter one. In the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, and they will be called children of the living God.

The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together, appoint one leader, and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel, great to your brothers my people, and of your sisters my loved ones. The Hebrew begins chapter two with what we have as chapter one, verse ten. So, they put it together in that way at the beginning.

What we have in the English is the way the Septuagint did it. The Greek translation, they put this verse here first. And we'll talk in a minute about a possible reason there.

But one of the reasons is verses ten and eleven of chapter one are prose, and chapter two, verse one is poetry, as is the rest of chapter two. Now, we've talked about this a bit before in the past, how do you recognize Hebrew poetry? Hebrew poetry is characterized by parallelism. That is, you have two lines, and the second line basically repeats the first, but bumps it up.

And it's interesting the various ways you can bump it up. You can make it more intense, or you can make it more specific, or you can make it more concrete. It's not just saying the same thing over again.

And so, you see, here are two lines. Ordinarily, there are three accent units in each line. Hebrew accent units.

I'll give you an example of that in just a moment. So, here's the way it looks with an English translation as literally as possible of the Hebrew. Beat one, say, beat two of your brothers, beat three, my people.

So, in the Hebrew, this is just one word. And this is just one word. The next line is actually only two beats.

One word, and of your sisters, beloved. So, possibly that's the reason why the sergeant chose to separate one ten and eleven and two one. Ten and eleven are prose, just straight sentences.

Two one is poetry, like the rest of chapter two. Now, that said, look down at the last verse of chapter two. Verse 23, the last half of it.

I will plant her for myself in the land. I will show my love to the one I call, not my loved one. I will say to those called not my people, you are my people.

And they will say you are my God. You see what has been done? It's called inclusio or envelope. We've bracketed what's in between with these two thoughts.

So, again, can we prove it one way or the other? No, we cannot. And as I say, the Hebrew puts one ten and eleven in chapter two. Chapter divisions are all late medieval.

Chapter divisions were put in in Hebrew 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th centuries AD. In English, 13th century. So, you can't hang much on chapter divisions.

I think, more importantly, and I personally think the Septuagint guys got it right. It's important that this second chapter be bookended. Begin and end.

This book is about God's unchanging love. There may be many, many dark things said, and we're going to see them here in this chapter. But surrounding it, and I like to think of Thomas Cranmer's words in the communion ritual that he translated from the Roman Catholic Latin for English speakers.

His property is always to have mercy. That's the property of God. The characteristic, the nature is always to have mercy.

And we sort of see it here in this bookending that's going on. Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, I am not her husband. Let me remove the adulterous look from her face, the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.

Otherwise, I'll strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born. Now, wait a minute. Who's the mother here and who are the children? We are explaining his life parable here.

So, who are we talking about? Who is the mother that has committed adultery? It's Israel. It is the nation. So, who are the children? Individuals, the present generation.

You can do the same thing with the church. We could look at the church today and say, in large measure, the institution is apostate. So, what about us? What about those of us in the present generation? Are we children of an adulteress? That's what we're dealing with here.

Now, again, as I say in the background, you can't make parables walk on all four feet. They don't always fit every detail. So, we ought not to push this too far, but nevertheless, I think we can say, broadly speaking, your mother is Israel, and the present generation is reflecting the mother.

How has mother been unfaithful? Look at verse 5. What did she say? I will go after my lovers. Now, I think that this second chapter is also reflecting a bit. I think Gomer has left him.

She has gone after her lovers because of what we'll talk about in chapter 3. But, I will go after my lovers. What do the lovers give her? What does it say? Food, clothing, water, and olive oil. To keep her free. Yes, yes.

Now, how does that relate to Israel? As Israel said, exactly, the other gods. What is idolatry? Now, I've said this several times, but repetition is the soul of education. Idolatry is the attempt to gain control over the forces of the psycho-socio-physical cosmos so as to provide for my needs for myself.

We must not think that idolatry is the worship of statues. Worship of statues is a reflection of this. Okay, how do I get the thunderstorm to supply my needs? I don't know how to manage thunderstorms.

Ah, but I know how to manage people. Okay, okay, Baal. You either come through or you're going to go hungry tomorrow.

Come on, Baal, get with it. You want a new suit of clothes? So, that was simply their way of trying to exercise control. We think we're too smart for that.

We've got other ways that we think we can exercise control. I will go after my lovers who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil, and my drink. Look down now at verse 8. She, this is NIV, she has not acknowledged.

You could say she does not know. She refuses to recognize that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine, the oil and who lavished on her the silver and gold she gave to Baal. Idolatry is utterly contrary to the idea of trusting someone who is not part of this cosmos can't control him through this world.

Can't control him with your tithes, can't control him with your church going, can't control him with your devotions. Trusting someone who is not of this world to determine what my needs really are. That's where the whole problem started.

Well, I need beauty and this tree is beautiful. I need wisdom and my friend the snake tells me God isn't going to give it to me. I need good flavor and it's obviously very tasty.

I have needs, and God is not going to meet them. So, I will have to meet them for myself. Now, it will be fun to find out in heaven what really happened there.

I doubt that Eve ate an apple, or as Sam Kamalasin used to say from India, it was not an apple; it was a mango. I don't think about that either, but I'm very confident that our first mother made a decision to fly in the face of a direct command of God, and our first father joined her without a murmur who will determine what my needs really are and meet them in his way and in his time. Oh, friends, that's scary, isn't it? Well, maybe he won't give me what I want.

I like some contemporary translations of Psalm 23 that say the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in need. The Lord is my shepherd, and he will give me everything I want. No, that's not what it says.

But there it is. Now, how does this constitute adultery in relation to Yahweh? Fulfilling your needs through illegitimate means? What else? Yeah? Yeah, looking to those things for what he alone can give. And remember what I said about the covenant.

The covenant is a marriage covenant. So, instead of going to Yahweh, my lover, I go to them. The question that has to be asked is, am I guilty of that? Are you guilty of that? And I would say, in many ways, it begins right here.

What do I really need? Husband? Hmm. No. No.

I will determine what I need, thank you very much. And, since you aren't giving me what I know I need right now, I'm going to have to go to somebody else to get what I need right now. So, what is the punishment going to be? Verse 3 and verse 6. Now again, remember we're talking about geography.

The land of Israel. What's God going to do to it? Going to make it a desert. He's going to strip it bare.

You went to the gods and the goddesses in order to get big, big crop grain. You went to the gods and the goddesses to get olive trees breaking down with their olives. They're going to be bare.

How is that an appropriate punishment? They won't get what they want. All the outside resources will be cut off. All the outside resources will be cut off.

Why? They looked for them in the wrong place. They looked for them in the wrong place. Yes.

And they credited to the wrong god when they got them. Yes, yes. Her efforts, Israel's efforts to make herself prosperous, will fail, and she will get poverty.

I think here is John's last chapter. A few of you are in my Sunday school class so you're going to get a sneak preview. Again, you've heard me say many, many times I hope there are instant replays in heaven.

I want to see these things. Peter says I don't know about you guys, but I'm going to go fishing. I will make you fishers of men.

We thought he was the Messiah. We've seen him. He shows up at all these odd times, but I'm going fishing.

And the nets were empty. Even when they were full in the future, they would still be empty. So, when John said, Peter, that's the Lord.

Boom. Now usually you take off your clothes to go swimming. Peter put on his.

I think he was stripped, probably only a long time off. He wasn't going to appear before Jesus naked. And Jesus said, why don't you put the net on the other side? The thing's so full it's breaking.

That's the Lord. That's the Lord. And Peter knew.

And it's, again, so interesting to me. Feed my lambs. Hmm.

You don't need to fish anymore, Peter. You've become a shepherd. Hmm.

So, it's the same here. Try to fulfill your needs your way, in your time, in your strength, and you will get poverty even if you're a multi-millionaire.

I'll strip her bare. She'll chase after her lovers, but she'll not catch them. She'll look for them but not find them.

Oh my. Oh my. What a picture of an empty life.

Always forever on the stretch until finally there's a cliff edge. Now we've got three therefore in this chapter—first one in verse 6, second one in verse 9, and the third one in 14.

Therefore, signals the effect of a prior cause. Because of this and this and this and this, therefore this. So, in verse 6, what is the prior cause? Infidelity.

She's been unfaithful. So, what's the effect? Thorn bushes in her way. Yes.

Walled in, chasing her lovers, not finding them. But how interesting that 7th verse gives us a little hint of where we're going. What will happen? She will say, I think maybe I ought to go back to my husband.

This isn't working like I thought it was going to work. How interesting. And the question we have to ask is, will her husband take her back? Verse 9, what's the effect there? Excuse me, what's the cause there? She didn't know where her gifts came from.

So, therefore, I'm going to take them away. I will take it back. And I'll uncover her before her lovers.

Again, think of history. And as so many of the prophets say, people are going to pass by Jerusalem and say, my goodness, what in the world did they do? She'll be exposed. And let me talk with you for a moment about the Canaanite pantheon.

At the top was the king, whose name was El, which is the Mesopotamian word for God. He's the God of the heavens. He's beneficent and kind, but basically powerless.

Grandpa. His wife is Asherah. Is she ready for this? The queen of heaven.

Where do we hear that language today? Mary. She's El's wife. She's the goddess of the earth.

He's the heaven, and she's the earth. And she's the goddess of fecundity, abundance. Pictures of her, show her with huge breasts and huge hips.

She's obviously able to have babies like fallen off a log. And it's interesting, in the paganized version of Yahwism, in the Bible, she is Yahweh's wife. And one of the things that comes up again and again, and apparently she was worshipped in groves of poplar trees.

And I'll leave it to you to figure out what the poplar trees represent. So, they will often talk about cutting down the Asherah. So that's the old king and queen.

The prince is called the Lord. The Syrians called him Hadad. The Philistines called him Dagon.

So, this is not actually his name, and it's his title. And he's the god of the atmosphere. He's the executive officer.

He's the one that makes things happen. The storm, the rain, and to some extent, the plants that come from the rain. You know, these things are not logical.

It's what works. But if you want something done, don't go to El, go to Baal. The princess is Anat.

Now, it depends on the story. She may be the wife of Baal. She may be the daughter of Baal.

She may be the sister of Baal. She may be Baal's prostitute. It's again, it's what works.

She is not the goddess of love. She's the goddess of passion. In one of the stories, Baal sends messengers.

He wants her to come to his house or whatever. And the messengers find her in the valley. And she's fighting.

And she's in blood up to her hips. She's got heads on one side and hands on the other side. And she's exulting.

And the messengers come and say, hey, Baal would like to see you. Oh, well, okay. Now, call her Inanna in Sumerian.

Or Ishtar in Babylonian. Or Anat in Canaan. Or Aphrodite.

Or Athene. Or Venus. She's the same babe.

The religion that Abraham left is the same religion Paul was confronting 2,000 years later. Change the names. It's the same understanding of reality.

So that's what's going on here. Let's go worship Asherah. And again, fertility is the name of the game.

I mean, if your wife is infertile, your life is in vain. If the rain doesn't come in Canaan, you don't have a big river to use for irrigation, like Mesopotamia or Egypt. You are absolutely dependent on that rain.

If it doesn't come, there's no Kroger's. You're going to die. You've got to get this stuff every year.

So, it's easy for us to sit here with Kroger's and say, well, those people ought to have been better than that. No, it's life and death. And are you going to trust Yahweh when you can't manipulate him? You can't make him do stuff? Boy, I don't know.

So, this is what Yahweh was up against. And, of course, the list goes on. There's one more, though, in the typical, and you see how this is a typical court.

King, queen, prince, princess. There's one more figure in the court, and that is the royal counselor, who has a double name.

We don't know exactly why. Kothar and Hasis. The wa is an and.

Kothar wa Hasis. He's the royal counselor. He tells people how to use magic.

Death is attacking Baal. The god Mot. And Baal says to Kothar, what am I going to do? And Kothar gives him magic clubs.

One club is named Smiter. The other club is named Driver. With Smiter you will smite him and with Driver you will drive him out.

Magic. That's how things work. So again, when Isaiah says in chapter 40, who was his counselor? He didn't have one.

He didn't need magic to make the world. He had his word. Well, that's all for you.

Okay. So we got two, therefore speaking out of the prior cause. You have been unfaithful to me.

You have not recognized that I am the one who gives you these things. So, poverty is going to result. I want to come back to verse 11 in a moment.

But verse 12, I'll ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers. I'll make them a thicket. Wild animals will devour them.

I'll punish her for the days she burned incense to the bales. She decked herself with rings and jewelry and went after her lovers. But me, she forgot.

Okay. Don't look at your Bible. Therefore, now you can look at your Bible.

what's he going to do? I will allure her. What? No. Therefore, I will divorce her.

No. No. I'm going to allure her.

I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There, I will give her back her vineyards. There, I will make the valley of trouble a door of hope.

There she will respond as in the days of her youth as in the day she came up out of Egypt. What does this tell us about God's character and nature? It doesn't change. What does John say? He is love.

He is love. Not he does love. Not he loves.

He is his very nature and character. That's who he is. That's what he's like.

Now, God says you can't use the word Baal anymore. Why not? Yeah. Oh, my husband, he's my Baal.

Lowercase l. God says you can't say that anymore. Why not? Too many idle associations with it. It suggests that the use of Baal for these gods Hadad or Dagon was in process.

It was happening. That you didn't call Hadad Baal all the time as though that were his personal name. But it's beginning to happen.

And so, God says you can't use that word any longer in regard to your husband. It's interesting. The Hebrew word is my man.

Don't call him my Baal anymore. Call him my man. Because we're going to get rid of the associations that are tied up in all of that as best we can.

Now, what's wrong with the pagan approach? Numero uno. Yes? What else? Exactly. I am running the show.

I am deciding what I need. And that's simply backwards. It's a lie.

It's not true. You're not in charge. If you haven't figured that out, see me afterwards.

I have been thinking a lot recently about lying and dishonesty as the basis of evil. That it is in so many ways an attempt to deny reality. Because reality stands over against me.

I have to come to terms with it. And I don't like that. I want reality to conform to me.

And that's what lying is about. That's what dishonesty is about. So, it's very interesting to me that in chapter 22 of the book of Revelation, he speaks about those who do wrong and are dishonest.

The problem began in the garden with a lie, the snake's lie about God. And today then, what is going on around us is a concerted attack upon reality. I don't feel like a man, therefore I am not a man.

We really believe that we can reshape reality to our own terms. Disaster. Disaster.

Reality is very obdurate. And you cannot reshape it to your terms. So, yes, paganism is simply not understanding reality.

You are not God and you are not in charge of your fate and your destiny. And as my sister said, it doesn't work. All right.

I want to talk to you now. Go back to verse 11. I will stop.

Let's see. I need to skip one here. Let's see.

Yeah. I'm going to stop all her celebrations, her yearly festivals, her new moons, her Sabbath days, and all her appointed festivals.

That's exactly what happened in Babylon. They had no temple. They couldn't offer sacrifices, which made God sick anyhow.

So, he says, I'm going to stop all that. And, if you look at verse 12, it was the Babylonians who ruined her vines and her fig trees. The land was depopulated and all those fields became thickets.

But, the exile, which the Babylonians intended, would wipe out Israelite culture and language and religion. In fact, verse 15, there she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. Amazing.

It'll be a wilderness of love because it was a time of revival. The great tragedy of the Holocaust is no; Israel can only see it as evidence that there is no God. But, the exile the exile became the new Egypt.

And, these Babylonian Jews who came back, they were fundamentalists. The people who had stayed behind for 50, 60, 70 years, they had all become moderately paganized. So, there's a big conflict when those folks came back.

But, it's exactly what Hosea is saying here. I'm going to take her into the wilderness. And, at the time Hosea is writing, say, round figures 730 with the exile staring them in the face here within 8 years, the thought of, no, it can't happen.

If it were to happen, it would destroy everything we've believed. Hosea says, no, I'm going to strip you. I'm going to strip you bare.

But I'll do it in order to love you. I will betroth you to myself again in that day you will call me my man you no longer will call me my bale. Can't call me bale.

I'll remove the names of the bales from your lips. No longer will their names be invoked. In that day I'll make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the creatures that move along the ground bow and sword and battle I'll abolish from the land so they may lie down in safety.

Yeah. Therefore, therefore, I'm going to allure her and lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. So, he says, I'm going to betroth you to me forever.

I will betroth you in rightness. I like that better than righteousness. Righteousness is so overlaid with moralism.

God does what is right in every circumstance. I'm going to betroth you in rightness. I'm going to betroth you in mishpat.

We've talked about this before. We'll talk about it some more. Our present idea of justice as enforced equality misses the point of this word badly.

This is God's pattern for life. You shall do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That's mishpat.

Hesed steadfast love and this word we have trouble with it's often sometimes translated compassion sometimes love but it's acts of tenderness. Does that involve compassion? Yes. Does it involve love? Yes.

But it's this tender. He's not going to come in with a ball bat. And it's interesting, I don't know that you can push it very far, but the noun racham is womb. The racham is a very tender place. And emunah, truth, and faithfulness. Do you want to know what God's holy character is? There it is.

So you could say I'm going to betroth you to me in holiness. And then look at the end of verse 20. Somebody read it, please. You will know Yahweh. Here we are. And this is why I chose the opening hymn. Knowing you. You will know who I am.

As my character is reproduced in you. We're going to talk a lot about know two weeks from now when we talk about chapter four. But intimate acquaintance.

And that day I'll respond, I'll respond to the skies. And they'll respond to the earth. El and Asherah. The earth will respond to the grain, the new wine, the olive oil. They'll respond to Jezreel. I'll plant her for myself in the land. I will show my love to the one I called not my loved one. I'll say to those called not my people, you are my people. And they'll say, you are my God.

I've been recently thinking about biblical storylines. Themes that run through the Bible. And this is one. You will be my people and I will be your God. Runs right through the Bible from beginning to end. I will say, you're my people. And you'll say, you're our God. That brings us then to chapter three. The Lord said to me, go show your love to your wife again. Though she is loved by another man. And is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites. Though they turn to other gods, and love the sacred raisin cakes. Now that's a textual problem there.

As I mentioned in next week's lesson, Hosea is one of the most difficult books textually in the Old Testament. There aren't many textual problems in the Old Testament, by and large. But Hosea has quite a few. There is a rather famous story of an oriental PhD student. Who did not expect to be asked a question on Hosea.

In his comprehensive exams. But he was. Discuss the text and theology of Hosea. Hosea. Text corrupt, also women. Needless to say, he did not do too well. So, that's one way of taking that. Though they turn to other gods. And love the sacred raisin cakes.

So, now this is, I think, significant. I bought her for 15 shekels of silver. 15 shekels is a cheap price. 30 shekels is the normal going price for a slave. She's on the block. And a lethic of barley.

I told her, you are to live with me many days. You must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man. And I will behave in the same way toward you.

We're talking about the exile. I'm going to buy you back again. The Israelites will live many days. Without a king or a prince. Without sacrifice or sacred stones. Without ephod or household gods. Afterward, the Israelites will return. And seek the Lord their God and David their king.

I think that what we've got there is a telescopic picture. And when you're looking through a telescope, things that are a hundred miles away look very close to things that are right near you. I think we're talking about God buying them back from the exile.

And Jesus buying us back from our sins. The Davidic king. No Davidic king after the exile. But there will come a day. There will come a day. So, the exile won't be the end of Israel. In some ways, it'll be the rebirth of Israel. Because God will allure them, and lead them into the wilderness. And speak tenderly, literally to her heart. That's what Boaz did to Ruth. That night on the threshing floor. When she is terrified of what this man could do to her, he spoke to her heart.

And this is what in Isaiah chapter 40. When God says, Comfort, comfort my people. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. I'm not out to get you. That's the snake talking. So, I think chapters 2 and 3 of Hosea. Are some of the most beautiful in the Bible.

Questions, comments, observations? You've been very silent. You got to get your game going here. Yes, yes, yes. I think you're absolutely right. And I think that's God's modus operandi that he brings us to the end of ourselves.

So that we have to think. Wait a minute. What's going on here? Yeah, but right with that though. I'm sitting here thinking. How do I read this for me today? Yeah. And if you don't realize that. You're just going to keep running your head up against the wall. Over and over and over. I sit here thinking.

This text is so important because it tells us: Look, if you're in a spot where you run up against a wall, ask yourself, what's happening? Yeah, yeah. So, we need to know how to read our situation and find God in the midst of it. Yeah, and that's really a pastoral role if your nets are empty all the time.

Even when they're full. Why is that? Why is that? Yeah, yeah. Good. What else? I like the Tinder and whatever. Yes. Ezekiel 36 says, I will take out your stony, stubborn heart. And give you a Tinder response. Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah. And I think. I think these words were vitally important. Then for the people who went into exile. When they're thinking. Oh, my goodness. God hates us. Or God has failed. And here. Oh no. Look here at what Hosea said. 30 years ago. God has taken us into the wilderness. In order to tell us again. I love you.

Oh, my goodness. I'm very confident. That the reason why the exile was not destruction. But was revival. Is because of the prophets. People smuggled those scrolls out.

To Babylon. And read them and said oh my goodness. Yes, yes. Matthew chapter 1. Frames history. With Abraham. David exile. In Messiah. Yeah. So, the exile is important.

In our understanding is. Yeah. As any of those other words. Yeah. And. And I always love this about Jesus' genealogy. There are five bad girls in there. Rahab for pity's sake. I'm Adam. But that's what God can do. That's what God can do. Bathsheba. I think she knew. Where David was, now that may be unkind to her. I don't know. But anyway. Anyway. Anyway. Yes.

Anything else? Yes. So, Hosea was primarily a prophet to Israel, the northern kingdom. Yeah. So. But I think there's no question that there were a lot of border crossings between Judah and Israel.

Well then. What we don't know. What we don't know about that is. When. For instance. When Ezra is talking about. Those who went back from exile. He includes some of the northern tribes. The thing about the ten lost tribes.

Is a bunch of hooley. So. So. It's not only the Judeans who went back. It is primarily the Judeans. But there were some from the northern. Tribes as well. But yes. The very reason that it's. The very evidence that it's preserved for us. Tells us. That it was. Not lost. When the northern. The kingdom went into exile. Okay. All hearts clear. As the Quakers say.

We'll see you in. I'll see you. Karen and I will see you in two weeks.

Let me pray. Oh father. Oh father. What can we say? You're my all. You're the best. You're my joy. My righteousness. And I love you lord. We love you. Thank you. That is when we have turned against you. When we have determined. That we can meet our needs. For ourselves. Better than you can. You still are waiting to welcome us back. Praise you. Praise you. In your name. Amen.